

## THE NOTIFICATION OF MEASLES.

BY

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MEASLES is one of the zymotic diseases which are not in the Schedule of Diseases in the Infectious Diseases Notification Act. The Sanitary Authority may, with the sanction of the Local Government Board, add zymotic diseases to those in the Schedule. The Council added whooping cough and measles to the Schedule. The former is no longer notifiable, as experience proved, in Dublin as elsewhere, that it was practically valueless.

It is desirable now to consider whether or not any advantage worth the cost is obtained by keeping measles on the Schedule.

I sent a circular letter to the medical officers of the 109 largest towns in the United Kingdom, asking information in reference to the notification of measles, its treatment in hospital, and if disinfection in reference to the disease was carried out. All, save three, replied, and from the replies the following information has been obtained :

*In the following 87 towns measles is not and has not been notifiable :—*

ENGLISH PROVINCIAL TOWNS.—Aberdare, Ashton-under-Lyne, Aston Manor, Barrow-in-Furness, Barnsley, Bath, Bootle, Bournemouth, Cambridge and Chesterton, Carlisle, Chester, Cheltenham, Darwen, Devonport, Eastbourne, Great Grimsby, Great Yarmouth, Gloucester, Hornsey, Hastings, Keighley, Leyton, Lincoln, Longton, Macclesfield, Middlesbrough, Merthyr-Tydvil,

Newport, (Mon.) Northampton, Oxford, Rhondda, Rochdale, Scarborough, Smethwick, Southampton, St. Helens, Stockport, Stockton-on-Tees, Tottenham, Tynemouth, Walthamstow, Wallasey, Warrington, Walsall, West Bromwich, Willesden, West Hartlepool, Worcester, York.

LONDON BOROUGHs.—Battersea, Bermondsey, Bethnal Green, Camberwell, Chelsea, City of London, City of Westminster, Deptford, Finsbury, Fulham, Greenwich, Hammersmith, Hackney, Holborn, Islington, Kensington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Paddington, Poplar, Southwark, Stepney, Stoke-Newington, St. Marylebone, St. Pancras, Shoreditch, Wandsworth, and Woolwich.

SCOTCH TOWNS.—Dundee, Dudley, Glasgow, Inverness, and Perth.

IRISH TOWNS.—Dublin, Rathmines, Pembroke, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Londonderry, and Waterford.

*In the following 13 towns it was formerly notifiable, but is not now :—*

Bury, Chesterton, Colchester, Coventry, Darlington, Edinburgh, Exeter, Hanley, Jarrow, Paisley, Rotherham, part of Westminster, and Wigan.

*In the following 6 towns it is notifiable :—*

Burton-on-Trent, Dover, Reading, Southport, Aberdeen, and Govan,

Therefore out of 106 towns measles is only notifiable in six. In one of these (Aberdeen) the utility of continuing it is now under consideration.

*In the following 4 towns it is notified voluntarily :—*

Henley, Wigan, Leith, and Paisley.

It is significant that out of the 19 towns which adopted measles notification, 13 have repealed the resolution making this disease notifiable.\*

\* Not including Dublin City and the Townships of Rathmines and Pembroke, in all of which measles is notifiable.

The only towns in Scotland in which measles is notifiable are Aberdeen and Govan. In the London Metropolitan Boroughs, with a population of four and a-half millions, it is not notifiable.

In Islington, Paddington, and York, school teachers notify the disease ; and in the case of York the teachers are not paid the usual fees, but if notification has been prompt, they get some remuneration from the " epidemic grant."

In Henley, fees are paid for " first cases " voluntarily notified.

#### HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.

In 79 of the towns measles is not treated in hospital. In the others, cases are " occasionally," " seldom," " rarely," " very rarely," when " occurring in public institutions or lodging-houses," " when paid for ; " admitted also in " exceptional cases," and from hotels and shops. In Glasgow when the cases occur in institutions or small houses. In Leith " severe forms and cases from crowded houses." In Paisley " first cases in crowded houses, and servants in large private houses." In Aberdeen the cases are admitted " when considered necessary." The answers from Govan, Limerick, and Cork were " yes."

#### DISINFECTION.

In 34 towns disinfection is never performed. In seven towns it is carried out. The answers from the remaining 65 towns showed that it was " very rarely " or " occasionally " performed in them. " When requested," and " if asked for," were the general replies to the query.

#### CONCLUSION.

It is clear that the notification of measles is in force in but an insignificant number of towns. The fact that the

majority of towns that adopted the notification of this disease having reversed their action, seems to show that little, if any, good resulted from the notification.\* I would, therefore, recommend that notification of measles should be restricted to first cases of the disease when an epidemic of measles has been established. As regards the treatment of measles cases in hospital, the dispensary physicians would, as heretofore, have cases that could not be properly treated at home removed to hospital. The teachers in schools should notify cases, and some remuneration should be given them for their trouble, and we believe this would be legal under the provisions of the Public Health Act.

The Public Health Committee of the Dublin Corporation made the following recommendation to the Town Council "That after the 31st March, 1903, the notification of cases of measles be confined to the first cases occurring in the practice of the physician in each quarter of the year. That is, if a case of measles were treated for the first time in the quarter ended 31st March, no further case should be notified until after an expiration of three months from that date."

If there be the slightest use in notification of measles it is only in the notification of early cases. The efforts of the Sanitary Authority may be of use in securing complete isolation of fresh cases, but when an epidemic is established, experience has shown that but little good results from notification. Of course voluntary notifications will often be made, and the dispensary physicians will see that the patients are, if necessary, sent to hospital.

The recommendation of the Public Health Committee was adopted by the Town Council, but it is subject to the approval of the Local Government Board. It is doubtful that the Board will sanction payments for voluntary notifi-

\* The notification in connection with the present epidemic of measles will cost about £500.

cations ; though the Local Government Board of England have virtually sanctioned such payments. That Board has, however, discretionary powers to act in relation to subjects not specially dealt with in the Statutes.